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USAID/W Notice
FA/IRM/TCO
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SUBJECT: Long Distance Calling Policy and Telephone System Information

The purpose of this notice is to enhance Agency staff awareness and disseminate policy regarding the use of government telephone system/services. FA/IRM's management responsibilities for the telephone system/services include: budget considerations; service requirements (e.g., new telephone installs, new lines, RADIX, fax machines, communications issues when offices move, etc.); invoice verification/dissemination through Call Detail Reporting; development and distribution of policy in accordance with GSA, OMB, and FIRMR guidelines; representing the Agency for telephone issues with GSA, DOS and various telecommunications vendors, (e.g., AT&T, C&P, TelPlus, MCI, etc.); and evaluation of new technology.

Long Distance Calling Policy:

The policy outlined on the following pages supersedes the interim policy issued by the former office of MS/MO in 1988. This policy will be incorporated into Handbook 21, which is currently being reviewed and updated.

Telephone System Information:

Through conversations with Agency staff, it became apparent that some personnel are unaware of the costs associated with using the telephone system/services. All Agency staff need to be cognizant that telephone services are not free, whether the service is a telephone call or moving telephone lines within an office. The Agency must pay for all uses just as an individual does in their home. Long distance calls, even through Federal Telephone System (FTS) are expensive. Services such as moving a telephone can cost between \$150 - \$250. Reprogramming a telephone to change call coverage path or the number of times it rings before forwarding, costs approximately \$50 per phone. All the costs are paid by the Agency through FA/IRM's telephone budget. That budget has grown from \$4 million in 1989 to over \$7 million in 1992. Telephones are provided to all Agency staff, whether direct hire or contractor, along with data, communication lines to provide connectivity to various computer systems. More information regarding telephone services and their associated costs may be found in the AID Telephone Directory, Section A, Instructions and Information.

We hope that by increasing Agency staff awareness of telephone expenses and reissuing this policy, overall costs will be reduced. All questions or comments regarding this notice should be directed to either Ms. Jane Bise or Mr. John Toner. They may be reached at 5-1452 or through electronic mail.

AUTHORIZED USE OF LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE SERVICES

I. SCOPE:

This section describes policies and procedures for the use of Government-provided and commercial long distance telephone services paid for by the Government. This policy is intended for AID/Washington staff. Missions are encouraged to develop policy and guidelines for their staff.

II. POLICY:

(a) Telephone calls placed over Government-provided and commercial long distance systems that will be paid for or reimbursed by the Government, shall be only used to conduct A.I.D.'s official business, emergency calls or calls the agency considers necessary in the interest of the government.

(b) To the maximum extent practicable, Federal employees shall place the Government's long-distance calls from Government-provided long distance services instead of using commercial toll services. To the maximum extent possible these long distance calls shall be made from the phone at the employee's desk or using the calling card that the government may have issued to the employee.

(c) In accordance with 5 CFR 735.205, the following practices are prohibited and a willful violation may result in a criminal, civil, or administrative action, including suspension or dismissal:

(1) Use of any Government system or service, or any other telephone service, where the Government pays the cost of the long distance call, for other than official business, except emergency calls and calls the agency determines are necessary in the interest of the Government (see Appendix A).

(2) Making unauthorized long distance telephone calls with the intent to later reimburse the Government.

(3) Listening-in to or recording telephone conversations except as specified in FIRER 201-21-603.

(4) Unauthorized use of call detail data.

(d) All employees should be prepared to identify all the long distance calls they made and to verify the authorized nature of each call. Call Detail Reports of long distance calls will be distributed periodically to organizations within the Agency for their review and verification of their authorized nature.

(e) The Government may choose to issue Calling Cards to employees to facilitate the government's long distance communications. Utilization of these cards is subject to the same policies and restrictions as long distance calls from the Government's telephone system. These cards must be requested by a Directorate/Program Office for the employee and the requirement must be verified annually.

(f) Except for a valid emergency, collect calls are not to be accepted. However, as a matter of courtesy, the person receiving the call should obtain the caller's name and telephone number so that the call can be returned. This can be accomplished by advising the Operator that acceptance of collect calls is not permitted and requesting that the operator provide the name and number of the caller. Unauthorized collect calls shall be treated as unauthorized personal calls.

(g) Secure (classified) telecommunications, both voice and data, shall not be transmitted over the normal (unsecure) telecommunications lines without the use of proper communications security (COMSEC) equipment. Due to processing requirements, requests should be sent to FA/IRM/PMA for review and appropriate action as soon as a need is recognized. The request should include, at a minimum, the following:

- (1) Specific requirements and desired implementation date.
- (2) written justification including volume of use.

III. PROCEDURES FOR DETERMINING IF A CALL MAY BE AUTHORIZED.

(a) Authorized calls may include official business calls, emergency calls and other calls the agency determines are necessary in the interest of the Government. Calls that are considered necessary in the interest of the Government must meet the criteria in the following paragraph. Examples of calls that may be considered necessary in the interest of the Government are shown in Appendix A.

(b) Telephone calls may properly be authorized when they -

- (1) Do not adversely affect the performance of official duties by the employee or the employees organization;
- (2) Are of reasonable duration and frequency;
- (3) Could not reasonably have been made at another time; or
- (4) Are provided for in a collective bargaining agreement that is consistent with these regulations.

(c) Personal long distance calls that must be made during working hours may be made over the commercial long distance network if consistent with the criteria in paragraph (b) of this section and are -

- (1) Charged to the employee's home phone number or other non-Government number (third number call);
- (2) Made to an 800 toll-free number;
- (3) Charged to the called party if a non-Government number (collect call); or
- (4) Charged to a personal telephone-calling card.

IV. COLLECTION FOR UNAUTHORIZED USE.

(a) The Agency shall collect for any unauthorized calls if it believes it is cost-effective to do so. Reimbursing the Government for unauthorized calls does not exempt the employee from appropriate administrative, civil or, criminal action.

(b) Agency collections shall include the value of the call, computed on the basis of commercial long distance rates (which may be higher than the Agency's cost) rounded to the nearest dollar; and an additional amount rounded to the nearest dollar to cover the administrative costs of determining that the call was unauthorized and processing the collection.

V. CALLING CARDS.

Employees issued an Agency calling card must safeguard the authorization code to prevent unauthorized use. When an employee leaves the duty assignment for which the card was authorized, the employee and employing Bureau/Office must notify FA/IRM/TCO. If the card is still needed by that employee, the new Bureau/Office's management should request that the card be transferred or a new card issued.

VI. CALL DETAIL REPORTS AND PAYMENTS.

(a) Bureaus/Offices must review their call detail reports carefully and, before returning them to FA/IRM/TCO with the appropriate certification, write the name of the employee who made each personal call beside the listed call. They should also attach a separate piece of paper with a list of inventory corrections for any names or telephone numbers listed that do not belong to their office.

(b) When personal calls are indicated, the Bureau/Office must prepare a transmittal memorandum for the A.I.D. Cashier, in the Office of Financial Management (FA/M/CAR/CAN, Rm. 6G3, SA-2, ATTN: A.I.D. Cashier). Attach a listing of the personal calls made and the costs for each call made by each individual. Also, attach cash, checks, or money orders (payable to the Agency for International Development) from the responsible employees. Send a copy of the memorandum (but not of checks nor money orders) to FA/IRM/TCO.

(c) Any employee who turns over a payment (cash, check, or money order) must be given a receipt by the Bureau/Office management office. The receipt must show the employee's name, reason for payment, telephone number called, number called from, date of call, current date, amount and form of payment, and the name and title of the person receiving the payment.

(d) In the event that efforts to obtain reimbursement from employees who have made personal calls are not successful, a memorandum should be sent to M/FM/A/OE, Room 612, SA-2, advising of a need to issue a Bill of Collection to the employee.

APPENDIX A

Examples of Long Distance Calls that may be Considered Necessary in the Interest of the Government:

- Use of Government provided long distance telephone systems and services are for the conduct of official business. Official business calls may include emergency calls and other calls that the Agency determines are necessary in the interest of the Government. Examples of such calls are:
 1. Calls to home or doctor if an employee is injured or becomes sick at work.
 2. An employee traveling on Government business is delayed by business or transportation problems and calls to notify family.
 3. An employee traveling on Government business in the United States makes a brief (less than 3 minutes) call home but not more than an average of two calls per week.
 4. An employee traveling on Government business outside the United States makes a brief (less than 3 minutes) call home but not more than an average of two calls per week.
 5. An employee is required to work overtime without advance notice and calls within the local commuting area (the area from which the employee regularly commutes) to advise family of the change in schedule or to make alternate transportation or child care arrangements.
 5. An employee makes a brief (less than 3 minutes) call daily to locations within the local commuting area to speak to spouse or minor children or those responsible for them (e.g., school or day care center) to see how they are.
 7. An employee makes brief calls to locations within the local commuting area that can be reached only during working hours, such as to a local government agency, bank or physician.
 8. An employee makes brief calls to locations within the local commuting area to arrange for emergency repairs to a personal residence or automobile.

DISTRIBUTION: AID LIST 1